



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

107 10 2006

Ms. Valerie A. Woodruff
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
The Townsend Building #279
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19903-1402

Dear Secretary Woodruff:

Thank you for submitting a proposal for consideration to participate in the Secretary's growth model pilot, which will allow selected States to use a growth-based accountability model to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Each proposal is being reviewed internally to determine how well it meets the seven core principles laid out in the Secretary's November 21, 2005 letter, making it eligible to advance to peer review.

The initial review of Delaware's proposal indicates additional information is needed to determine how it meets the seven core principles. I remind you that an expected result from the pilot project is the ability to analyze how growth serves as a measure of accountability in comparison to the current status model. In accordance with Principle 4, such a comparison is only possible when a growth model and its growth targets are applied to all students and not only to students who missed the proficiency target. As we discussed in our March 9, 2006 phone call, please provide information to answer the following questions found in the Department's peer review guidance (please see www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/growthmodelguidance.doc for that information). The reference in parenthesis is to that particular element in the guidance document:

Principle 1. Universal proficiency

- Has the state proposed technically and educationally sound criteria for "growth targets" for schools and subgroups? (Principle 1.2)
 - What are the state's growth targets relative to the goal of 100 percent of student proficient by 2013-14? (Principle 1.2.1)
 - Please clarify the step-by-step process for how the growth model will be calculated at the school level. Providing an example of the process on a model school would help clarify the process.
 - Please provide a rationale for how this growth model with the proposed value table (page 12 of the proposal) will achieve 100 percent proficiency by 2013-14.
 - Has the state adequately described the rules and procedures for establishing and calculating "growth targets"? (Principle 1.2.2)

- How will the growth model be applied across grades with different numbers of performance levels?

Principle 2. Establishing appropriate growth targets at the student level

- Has the state proposed a technically and educationally sound method of depicting annual student growth in relation to growth targets? (Principle 2.1)
 - Has the state adequately described a sound method of determining student growth over time? (Principle 2.1.1)
 - Please further explain and provide a rationale for the value table included on page 12 of the proposal.
 - Please further explain and provide a rationale for the determination that an average gain of 150 points is sufficient to meet growth.

Principle 4. Inclusion of all students

- Does the state's growth model address the inclusion of all students, subgroups, and schools appropriately? (Principle 4.1)
 - Does the state's growth model address the inclusion of all students appropriately? (Principle 4.1.1)
 - Please clarify whether the growth model will be applied to all students in the every school in the state. Please be aware that the Department will look more favorably upon models that examine growth of all students.
 - Please clarify how the growth model will factor in students who are new, have missing data, or are unmatched.
 - Does the state's growth model address the inclusion of all subgroups appropriately? (Principle 4.1.2)
 - Please provide additional information on how the growth model takes into account students who take the alternate assessment.

Principle 5. State assessment system and methodology

- How will the state report individual student growth to parents? (Principle 5.2)
 - How will an individual student's academic status be reported to his or her parents in any given year? What information will be provided about academic growth to parents? Will the student's status compared to the state's academic achievement standards also be reported? (Principle 5.2.1)
 - Please clarify how the results of the growth model will be reported to parents and the public at large. Please provide a rationale for not reporting individual student growth to parents.
- Does the statewide assessment system produce comparable information on each student as he/she moves from one grade level to the next? (Principle 5.3)
 - How has the state determined that the cut-scores that define the various achievement levels have been aligned across the grade levels? What procedures were used and what were the results? (Principle 5.3.3)
 - Please clarify the cut scores for the various achievement levels and provide additional evidence regarding how the cut scores for the various levels were determined.

- Has the state used any “smoothing techniques” to make the achievement levels comparable and, if so, what were the procedures? (Principle 5.3.4)
 - Please provide additional information regarding what confidence interval will be used and how it will be calculated.

Principle 6. Tracking student progress

- Has the state designed and implemented a technically and educationally sound system for accurately matching student data from one year to the next? (Principle 6.1)
 - What studies have been conducted to demonstrate the percentage of students who can be “matched” between two academic years? Three years or more? (Principle 6.1.4)
 - Please provide additional evidence of the match rates for all states and for subgroups for two, three, or more years.

The additional information you provide will be considered an addendum to Delaware’s original application and will be included in the review process for the pilot. **The information should be submitted no later than March 17, 2006.** Please provide the information to Dr. Catherine Freeman at catherine.freeman@ed.gov.

I appreciate your interest in the growth model pilot. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Dr. Freeman at the email address above or by calling (202) 401-0113. I thank you in advance for your response.

Sincerely,



Henry L. Johnson

cc: Robin Taylor